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GAITHER, NELL WEDDELL. The Dolphin as Symbol in Three Modern Works: Ernest Hemingway, The Old Man and the Sea; William Butler Yeats, "Byzantium;" T. S. Eliot, The Waste Land. (1970) Directed by: Randolph Bulgin. pp. 50

Through focusing on a single image, that of the dolphin, the task here has been to present a critical study of the differing uses to which the image has been put by three major modern writers, Hemingway, Eliot, and Yeats. By seeking to analyze dolphin symbolism in specific modern works (The Old Man and the Sea, "Byzantium," and The Waste Land), the investigation has attempted to indicate the dolphin's continuing value as a symbol throughout literary history. The procedure of this paper has dealt in comparatives--comparative mythology, comparative anthropology, comparative biology, comparative history, and comparative criticism. The result of this examination has been, first, to determine the significance of the dolphin as symbol in its own strength and, second, to determine its significance as an interpretative agent enlightening pertinent works of literature.

THE DOLPHIN AS SYMBOL IN THREE MODERN WORKS:
ERNEST HEMINGWAY, THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA;
WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS, "BYZANTIUM;"
T. S. ELIOT, THE WASTE LAND

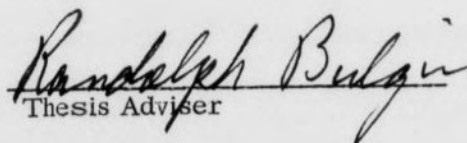
by

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APPROVAL SHEET

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No one ever does anything alone, I am convinced. Certainly in this effort many hands have conspired to help me. In 1967 my sister brought home to me a new acquisition from the public library: Deities and Dolphins by Nelson Glueck (which my Greek professor soon was to present to me). Through this work I was introduced to Professor Stebbins' dissertation and to the definitive study of Professor Goodenough, without which my pursuit of dolphin symbolism would have held quite limited excitement and value for me.

It should go without saying that special thanks are expressed to my thesis adviser (Professor Bulgin) not only for his patience and constant encouragement but for reading and criticizing very rough drafts. In this area my academic adviser (Professor Stephens) also is especially thanked for rendering invaluable critical aid also by reading this in a terribly rough form. To another member of the English faculty (Professor James Wimsatt) goes my deep appreciation for bringing my interest in symbolism and my preliminary study in it to the attention of my advisers. For one of the French faculty's (Professor Kathleen Bulgin) reading of the near final text I am also most thankful.

However, thanking my graduate advisers is not quite enough. Interest in the dolphin began in my undergraduate days. In fact, the very first term paper I wrote in college was (for freshman biology) on the dolphin, "Friendship For No

Advantage." My professor awarded it an A+[Ⓢ] and always asked me about dolphins when we chanced to meet on campus. Thus he kept me alerted to delphinology and challenged me to further study. Further study developed but, I daresay not in the area he intended. It developed in the direction of symbolism, resulting in independent study under the guidance of my classical professor. My thanks go both to her and to the then chairman of the English department who permitted this seemingly rather vague dolphin chase.

Still, this is not quite inclusive of all those who have my gratitude in this project. It was an undergraduate philosophy lecture that interested me in the writings of Mircea Eliade, who has contributed to some of the basic thought here. Too, there are librarians at both schools to thank. (One at UNC-G brought me her personal German dictionary when the stacks failed to yield a helpful one.)

There are many others. Perhaps (and it is entirely likely) all of my professors at both institutions have contributed to this study. Yes. This, then, might testify to what a liberal education might be about. Certainly, I am appreciative of the very real interest my professors have taken in my bid for academic discipline and in its culmination in this thesis.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Like any form of art literature involves communication of some type of meaning through a particular medium. Literature's medium, of course, is language. Most definitions aiming to discriminate literature from other types of utterance emphasize its content, especially the imaginative character of what is said. Recognizing that literature does not exist in isolation from either life or language but that it derives certain of its basic characteristics from language and has an intimate, essential relationship to life, I feel that imagery represents a salient point of fusion in which life and language become communication, and so, literature. Underneath this imagery doubtless lies a very basic symbolism. This study will concern itself with how such a basic symbolism might inform a piece of literature. Specifically, it will treat of how the dolphin as symbol seems to inform three modern literary works: The novel, The Old Man and the Sea, the poem, "Byzantium" and The Waste Land.

As animal, the dolphin early captured the interest of man and has continued to interest and to amuse him through the ages. With the same attractions that entertained the world six centuries before Christ, the dolphin fascinates the late twentieth century. It swims incredibly fast, being the fastest animal of land or sea. (Aristotle correctly named it the swiftest living mammal.) It leaps high and extremely gracefully. It spectacularly kills sharks, pitting its two hundred

fifty pounds against a thousand pounds.¹

Dolphins unaccountably herd fish and guide ships for man. They vocalize with one another in the air as well as under water. And they socialize with human beings.²

Everything that the dolphin does is interesting; much is astonishing; and a great deal is obscure. Perhaps the most puzzling, the most delightful, and the most intriguing of its characteristics is its mysterious affection for man. It is unique in the realm of nature, unique in the known universe, for a creature in its natural state to proffer assistance and friendship to man. Furthermore, man is not even a part of this creature's daily environment. Yet the dolphin selects human companions and rescues human beings floundering in an inhospitable ocean.

Twentieth century man has taken measures to protect this exceptional mammal legally.³

¹Anthony Alpers, Dolphins: The Myth and the Mammal (Boston, 1961), pp. 30-33.

²E. B. Tracey, "Athlete of the Sea: The Bottle-Nose Dolphin, Nature, XXXVI (August 1943), 355. See also P. L. Soljak, "Dolphin That Meets All the Ships," Saturday Evening Post, March 2, 1946, p. 41; Alpers, pp. 206-211; and Charles Harry Whedbee, "Hatteras Jack," Legends of the Outer Banks and Tar Heel Tidewater (Winston Salem, N. C., 1966), pp. 69-76.

³On September 26, 1904, the Parliament of New Zealand enacted a law designed to protect one specific dolphin, included that dolphin's species in the Act, and became the first government to protect dolphins. In 1956 the Act was amended to read "any dolphin" in the harbors and bays designated. (Alpers, pp. 209-211.)

In March 1966 United Press International carried an announcement of the Soviet Fisheries Minister's banning the catching and killing of the "marine brother to man, whose brain is strikingly close to man's and who may eventually teach its language to man." (Unsigned item, Greensboro Daily News, March 3, 1966, p. B2.) (Note continued on next page.)

Long ago the Greeks had recognized the specialness of the dolphin. The dolphin belonged to them as part of their heritage and they were a part of dolphin culture. They did not need a law to protect the dolphin. It was against Greek religious usage to harm one:

The hunting of Dolphins is immoral, and that man can no more draw nigh to the gods as a welcome sacrificer nor touch their altars with clean hands, but pollutes those who share the same roof with him, who willingly devises destruction for Dolphins. For equally with human slaughter the gods abhor the deathly doom of the monarchs of the deep.⁴

In the seas of the world to which they returned some 60,000 years ago, many species of dolphin swim. Of these, the Bottlenose species Tursiops truncatus, inhabiting the Mediterranean Sea and the shoal waters of Europe and the United States, has been a particular favorite. The considerable space that the Bottlenose, along with the Common dolphin, occupies in the folklore of many cultures testifies to the excitement the dolphin has created in the universal imagination. Jet-age living and space-age thinking do not diminish, but rather seem to intensify, the appeal that this mammal continuously seems to have held for man since before the days of Homer. The Bottlenose dolphin, which quite often is called porpoise, interests a variety of persons in the contemporary world. It has captured the attention of research scholars in several sciences,

In the United States the North Carolina State Senate passed a law on July 5, 1967, making it a criminal offense intentionally to injure or kill porpoises. (Unsigned item, Greensboro Daily News, July 6, 1967, p. B4.) Porpoise is interchangeable with dolphin.

⁴Oppian, Halieutica in Oppian, Colluthus, Tryphiodorus, trans. A. W. Mair (London, 1928), p. 493 (V, 411-428).

councils of government, status seekers, commercial exploiters, and the ordinary person.

As image, the dolphin also early established a tantalizing and clinging aura of symbolism upon the imagination of man, for its use reaches back into prehistoric times. According to Eunice Burr Stebbins in The Dolphin in the Literature and Art of Greece and Rome, dolphin appliques on ostrich eggs were found in the shaft graves at Mycenae. And there is evidence, she says, that in spite of a want of literary sources to interpret relics, the dolphin possessed substantial symbolic and decorative value in the Prehellenic age.⁵

It follows that having held a position of such high regard as an animal (see above, p. 3), the dolphin as symbol and decoration played a sizeable role in Greek thought and art. Not confined to the Greeks, dolphin inscriptions in pagan usage were "almost omnipresent" on tombs of the Hellenistic and Roman periods "where they appear by the thousands, either alone or with the trident or anchor."⁶

It may safely be assumed that the burden of proof, not merely of assertion, rests upon anyone who could claim that a symbol thus universal in funerary ornament was, at least in that setting, "merely decorative." It was obviously conventional, and many of the professional artists who used dolphins may have put them in one place rather than another largely as they fitted into their designs. But the dolphin itself must have meant something or it would not have persisted in the crudest gravestone scratchings and in graffiti--where "convention" and "decoration" are alike strangers--as well as in highly artistic creations.⁷

⁵(Menasha, Wisc., 1929), pp. 36, 59.

⁶Erwin R. Goodenough, Fish, Bread and Wine, in Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period, V (Kingsport, Tenn., 1956), 22-23.

⁷Ibid.

The use of the dolphin image survives in many other places, on walls and vases and sculpture.

The Classical age painted the dolphin on vases, shields, and women's garments. It carved it often as a prop for statues, cut it into rings and used it in funerary designs, in murals, on buildings and on coins.

Today the dolphin image is a commonplace in universal decoration. All sort of ornaments, personal or knickknack, assume a dolphin shape and the dolphin is a familiar application in any decor relating to water--fountains, reflection pools, swimming pools, bathrooms, and seashore and lakeside facilities. A crowned dolphin marked the celebrated Lille porcelain of eighteenth century France. The design of a dolphin supporting a fluted dish executed in pottery and glass during the past few centuries prevails even today.⁸

Dolphin tables and chairs so dominated the beautifully sculptured sixteenth century furniture of Europe that in a well known play of the period Mistress Quickly could boast of her tavern's dolphin chamber.⁹ In the early nineteenth century American glass and pottery products reflected the designs of imported European products, particularly the dolphin motif from the Netherlands. A variety of the design in glass, especially the dolphin candlestick, enjoyed fashionable regard. Use of the dolphin as an ornament in glass doubtless originated in Venice in the thirteenth century, when its use on furniture probably

⁸E. A. Bjerkoe, "Dolphins," *Hobbies*, LXIII (October 1958), 56.

⁹William Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, in *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. Hardin Craig (Chicago, 1951), p. 712 (II, i, 94).

began.¹⁰

During the Middle Ages the multiple applications of heraldry with its metaphorical language added immensely to the dolphin's popular display. In Venice Aldus Manutius devised a dolphin twined round an anchor to mark the splendid editions of The Aldine Press; while in Rome the shield of Pope Paul III bore an emblazoned dolphin twisted on an anchor.¹¹ Three hundred years before the Venetian and the Vatican emblems appeared, the French Guigues IV had initiated the legacy of the Dauphin by adopting a dolphin for his crest.¹²

Having played so active a role in man's imagination in the past, the dolphin as symbol continues to appear in art and literature. Perhaps it will not be surprising to find it as freshly intriguing in sign and symbol today as it apparently has been to the cultures of the past.

By examining three quite modern literary works, this study intends to demonstrate the continued effectiveness of the dolphin as symbol in revealing imagery and communicating meaning.

¹⁰Bjerkoe, p. 57.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²"Dauphin," The Encyclopaedia Britannica (1965), VII, 92.

CHAPTER II

THE DOLPHIN AS SYMBOL IN HEMINGWAY

He was asleep in a short time and he dreamed of Africa when he was a boy and the long golden beaches and the white beaches, so white they hurt your eyes, and the high capes and the great brown mountains. He lived along that coast now every night and in his dreams he heard the surf roar and saw the native boats come riding through it. He smelled the tar and oakum of the deck as he slept and he smelled the smell of Africa that the land breeze brought at morning. . . .

He no longer dreamed of storms, nor of women, nor of great occurrences, nor of great fish, nor fights, nor contests of strength, nor of his wife. He only dreamed of places now and of the lions on the beach. They played like young cats in the dusk and he loved them as he loved the boy. He never dreamed about the boy. . . .

During the night two porpoises came around the boat and he could hear them rolling and blowing. He could tell the difference between the blowing noise the male made and the sighing blow of the female.

"They are good," he said. "They play and make jokes and love one another. They are our brothers like the flying fish." . . .

He did not dream of the lions but instead of a vast school of porpoises that stretched for eight or ten miles and it was in the time of their mating and they would leap high into the air and return into the same hole they had made in the water when they leaped. . . . (Italics mine.)

After that he began to dream of the long yellow beach and he saw the first of the lions come down onto it in the early dark and he rested his chin on the wood of the bows where the ship lay anchored with the evening off-shore breeze and he waited to see if there would be more lions and he was happy.

¹³Ernest Hemingway, The Old Man and the Sea (New York, 1952), pp. 24-25, 48, 81.

I am the wind of purifiers,
 Rama of warriors,
 I am the dolphin of water monsters,
 Of rivers I am the Ganges.¹⁴

The aim of this part of my study is to reach a deeper understanding of Hemingway's Santiago in The Old Man and the Sea as an ordinary man made extraordinary, somewhat in the following sense:

The extraordinary man, is merely the ordinary man intensified; a person whose life is sometimes lifted to a high pitch of feeling and who has the gift of making others share his excitement.¹⁵

One development of this thought will show Santiago as epic hero.

Another will indicate what his name might mean, suggesting another kind of hero, a patron saint. Above all, this concept of the heroic is to be examined through an investigation of the lion and, especially, of the porpoise as motifs. It is proposed that the frolicking lions represent man's human nature at its best, while the frolicking porpoises represent man's divine nature--or that special moment when man goes beyond his best human nature to achieve the heroic.

The dolphin is a specific sea mammal. The porpoise is quite another animal altogether. Biologists have long exhorted laymen to make the proper distinction between the two animals, remarking that the porpoise is not even

¹⁴The Bhagavad Gita, trans. Franklin Edgerton (New York, 1944), p. 53 (X, 31). For other references to the king of seabeasts, see comparisons to the lion or eagle in Aesop, Corpus Fabularum Aesopicarum, ed. Augustus Haurath, Lipsiae, 1959, p. 169 (I, 251), and Oppian, Halieutica in Oppian, Colluthus, Tryphiodorus, trans. A. W. Mair, London, 1928, pp. 269-270 et pas. (I, 649-654 et pas.)

¹⁵"Introduction," The Pocket Book of Robert Frost's Poems (New York, 1946), p. 1.

in the same family as the dolphin. In vain have they protested. They may be said officially to have surrendered to the popular term of "porpoise" for "dolphin" when Robert Leslie Conly in The Journal of the National Geographic Society acknowledged and accepted the usage. (Dr. John C. Lilly, our foremost delphinologist, carefully maintains the distinction.)¹⁶

There is yet another animal that occasionally has compounded the confusion already prevalent between "dolphin" and "porpoise." That is the dolphin fish, not a mammal at all. In The Old Man and the Sea Hemingway lets the Old Man mention the dolphin fish several times and finally lets him catch one for use as food and therapy for his cramped hand.

Later when the Old Man dreams, for once, not of lions, it is of "porpoises." "Porpoise" is a "natural" term for "dolphin" in the United States and in the Gulf area. "Porpoise" also might be considered a natural term to a writer familiar with the Gulf area who already has brought "dolphin fish" into his story and more than once has referred to that fish simply as "dolphin."¹⁷

Therefore, we are choosing to work on the premise that Hemingway's eight or ten miles of porpoises in Santiago's dream are eight or ten miles of dolphins--in fact, specifically Tursiops truncatus the Bottlenose dolphin, the familiar "porpoise" of the Gulf Stream.

Some twenty years ago it was pointed out that the brain of the Bottlenose

¹⁶"Porpoises: Our Friends in the Sea," CXXX, (September 1966), 395-425.

¹⁷e.g. pp. 59, 71-74, 76.

dolphin is comparable to that of man, both in size and in general cortical development.¹⁸

The Tursiops, due to the curving bony structure of its mouth, wears a permanent smile, and, like the human being, boasts a flexible neck. This flexible feature not only adds to its efficiency but also probably accounts for the creature's exceptional grace. The dolphin, also, is one of the animals whose eyes have range. Coupled with a flexible neck, an eye with range lends a very humanlike quality to the Tursiops' appearance, and may be the characteristic which provoked the observation that this animal, again like man, demonstrates a great deal of curiosity about its surroundings. Its dexterity in slow movements, its body flexibility, its ability to vocalize in air as well as under water, its extreme rapidity in learning, the size and complexity of its cerebral cortex, the curiosity it displays about its environment--all indicate its high intelligence.¹⁹

Other traits, too, relate the sea's creature of superior intelligence

¹⁸A. F. McBride and D. O. Hebb, "Behavior of the Captive Bottlenose Dolphin, Tursiops truncatus," Journal of Comparative and Physiological Psychology, XL, (April 1948), 111-123. The authors argue that this species probably has a high ability to learn from experience. Since this early study the subject of intelligence has been revived and greatly expanded. The advanced nature of the brain structure has been fully established. Not only are cells densely packed in the thalamus, as in man, but the cortex shows extensive "silent" areas. (R. J. Andrew, "Evolution of Intelligence," Science, CXXXVII, (August 24, 1962), 585-589, and John C. Lilly, The Mind of the Dolphin (Garden City, N. Y., 1967), pp. 99-136.

¹⁹Anthony Alpers, Dolphins: The Myth and the Mammal (Boston, 1961), pp. 42-44; 49; 51-52; 130. Also John C. Lilly, Man and Dolphin (New York, 1961), pp. 266-279, and L. Gebhart, "Mind-mapping the Dolphin; First Complete Atlas of Its Brain," Science News, XCII (August 26, 1967), 206-207.

with land's superior creature. They concern the social and the biological.

Dolphin gestation, usually resulting in a single birth a year, is of such interest and concern to the dolphin community that an assistant mother assumes responsibility for the newborn along with the infant's mother.

Apparently, the dolphin lives in smoothly functioning organized societies of very sociable and very cooperative individuals. In open ocean it moves in large groups, using advance scouts which report to the group. Follow up scouts appear to go out to verify any report of the first scout that might be unusual.

The dolphin's feeding procedure, also, demonstrates considerable organizational ability and intelligent self-control. Dolphins form a tight circle around a school of fish and as they maintain the circle, a few individual dolphins at a time move in and feed. Such procedure is comparable to man's polite restraint in dining. Because it is conducive to relaxed feeding--the "tribe" is between the food and potential danger--it might have some connection with the dolphin's affableness and intelligence since good digestion is a factor in man's disposition and mental efficiency.

Modern man is recognizing the specialness of the dolphin. The ancients readily acclaimed that the dolphin was, like man, quite a special mammal, both humanlike and divine.²⁰ One of the oldest myths about the dolphin relates to

²⁰"Diviner than the Dolphin is nothing yet created; for indeed they were aforetime men and lived in cities along with mortals, but by the devising of Dionysus they exchanged the land for the sea and put on the form of fishes; but even now the righteous spirit of men in them preserves human thought and human deeds." (Oppian, pp. 270-271 [I, 649-650]).

this and indicates how it became an outstanding creature. The tale seems especially pertinent to the Hemingway story.

Poseidon, god of the sea, had need of assistance when he wished to marry because his nuptial choice, Amphitrite, was as loath to become queen of the sea as Hera and Persephone were to become the brides of their kings. Amphitrite hid in the waters outside the jurisdiction of Poseidon. (Poseidon only controlled Greek waters; Oceanus ruled the outer waters.) Yet Poseidon was king of his realm and a king can command the services of his creatures. He selected the dolphin of all his kingdom to trust with the mission of fetching Amphitrite. Fetch her the dolphin did. For its splendid service Poseidon made the dolphin sacred to himself.²¹

In selecting an emissary Poseidon required one worthy of serving the king of the sea. The sea king's agent needed to be intelligent enough to understand its high commission and to execute it. It needed the qualities of speed, trustworthiness, diligence, and knowledge. It needed to know how to travel in the known waters, --experience, --and how to cope with the mystery of the unknown waters, --wisdom. It needed courage to brave the unknown realm, to voyage into the great beyond, and to return triumphant. In short, it needed the stamina and the wit to harrow hell successfully.

The analogies to the Old Man are interesting. A critical point, if not the critical point, of the Hemingway tale is the Old Man's going out too far,

²¹Robert Graves, The Greek Myths (Baltimore, Md., 1955), I, 59.

beyond the realm of the known fishing area into the unknown. He goes out, like the dolphin, at great peril to himself and returns, also like the dolphin, with a regal prize. Like the dolphin he has been diligent, patient, courageous, ingenious and wise. He has suffered exceedingly, as we know, and answers the boy's question, "How much did you suffer?" with "Plenty." (p. 126)²²

Above all, the period of the Old Man's travel into the unknown has been a three-day one. "The sun was rising for the third time since he had put to sea when the fish started to circle." (p. 86) In western world literature we have learned to be suspicious of the number three as relating to the Christian tradition. A three days' journey into the unknown is easily recognized, then, as suggesting the journey into Hades, or the epic heroic harrowing of hell. Also noon and an ominous sky figure in this story as they do in the Crucifixion story--" . . . now that the fight is over.' He looked at the sun carefully. It is not much more than noon, he thought. 'And the trade wind is rising.'" (p. 96)

Another evocation of the Crucifixion, aside from the torn hands of the Old Man, occurs in, "'Ay,' he said aloud. There is no translation for this word and perhaps it is just a noise such as a man might make, involuntarily, feeling the nail go through his hands and into the wood." (p. 107)

The Old Man is constantly exercising wisdom throughout his ordeal. Also, he is the boy's tutor who "can teach him everything." (p. 126) Throughout the novel, too, the Old Man exhibits courage and endurance, e.g., "'Fish,'

²²The Old Man and the Sea (New York, 1952). All textural references are to this edition.

he said softly, aloud, 'I'll stay with you until I am dead,' (p. 52) and ". . . you have been many hours with the fish. But you can stay with him forever.'"

(p. 58) Hence, the Old Man, like the dolphin, has the stamina and the wit to harrow hell. He is a true epic hero. "My choice was to go there to find him beyond all people. Beyond all the people in the world." (p. 50) He is a sacred prince with a quest. Here again he is like the dolphin. The reader is referred to the chapter's headnote, for the dolphin is the creature which, at the height of India's mythopoeic imagination, Hinduism paralleled with the sacred hero, Prince Râma.²³

Also, by his heroic action, the Old Man is brother to the dolphin. He, himself, acknowledges such a relationship when he speaks of the porpoises: "'They are good,' he said, 'They play and make jokes and love one another. They are our brothers.'" (p. 48)

The Old Man's name, Santiago, means, of course, St. James; and St. James is the patron saint (hero) of Spain, or, loosely, of the Spanish people. St. James has further implications:

Somewhat more specifically, James insists that righteousness involves performance, not merely perception of thought. A piety that is exclusively devotional or intellectual is counterfeit. Effective piety is a synthesis of endurance, obedience, impartiality, integrity, discipline, humility, patience, prayerfulness, and love.²⁴

²³African Folktales and Sculpture, ed. Paul Radin (New York, 1952), p. 3. In suggesting the highest peaks attained by the mythopoeic imagination, Paul Radin designates three specific locations and points of time. They are the early second millennium B.C., India; the early first millenium B.C., Greece; and Medieval Europe.

²⁴The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, ed. George Arthur Buttrick et al., (New York, 1962), s.v. "James."

Many of the above qualities coincide with the qualities that Hemingway has given his hero: endurance (pp. 46, 52, 64 et al.), obedience (to the ritual of his profession), integrity (p. 32), humility (pp. 13-14, especially), patience (e.g. p. 59), prayerfulness (pp. 53, 60, 64-65 et passim), and love (e.g. p. 54). Discipline, wisdom and ingenuity are expressed in "Now is no time to think of what you do not have. Think of what you can do with what there is." (p. 110) The Old Man, like his name saint, believes in works. "Santiago" meaning "saint" and "man" also holds an expression of the dual nature of man, which, we will see, the story's Santiago manifests in his dreams, and which has already been mentioned in connection with the dolphin. (See above, p. 14.)

In the image of the frolicking lions there seems to be a symbolism that should be looked at before any further examination of porpoise imagery. The lion, like man, is an intricate social animal. Its nature is irascible, indolent, selfish, gentle and affectionate. It is a beautiful, powerful, noble, carnivorous animal, and a cooperative hunter, although not always a willing divider of spoils. It is a killer of its own kind and a devourer even of its own young, about which it is also fiercely protective.²⁵

The four-legged King of Beasts is not at all unlike the two-legged King of Beasts. Man's nature is irascible, indolent, selfish, gentle and affectionate. Man is a beautiful, powerful, noble and carnivorous animal. He is a cooperative worker, and he is certainly a killer of his own kind. His wars every generation

²⁵George B. Schaller, "Life With the King of Beasts," Jour. of the National Geographic Society, CXXXV (April 1969), 494-519.

are only one way in which he is a devourer of his own young. In the picture of the hand game Hemingway draws the Old Man as a land animal of superior strength. Brute strength represents human nature, man's animal nature. The hand game shows the Old Man besting a champion of brute strength--a giant, a "lion." However, the frolicking, affectionate lions playing on Hemingway's beaches suggest human nature at its peaceful best.

The boy in the story represents the best in human nature, too. Hemingway links playing lions with the boy. "He loved them as he loved the boy." (p. 25) Both here possibly relate to innocence, too. The Old Man might be dreaming of the serenity and happy potential of his youth because the author does tell us that "he dreamed of Africa when he was a boy." (p. 24) Lions on beaches create a serene image. The beaches might be a plateau between two areas of vigorous challenge--jungle and sea. The lions on beaches, then, surpass the image of sleeping lions as peaceful imagery because they are playful, not a potential danger, as a sleeping lion is. "A vast school of porpoises that stretched for eight or ten miles" gives an even stronger symbol of peacefulness. Dolphins, or porpoises, like only calm water. When a storm approaches they rush to serene waters.²⁶

When he sees ten miles of porpoises, the Old Man probably sees ten miles of peacefulness. At sea ten miles is a considerable stretch. It might be that the Old Man envisions the serene waters of eternity waiting to receive him.

²⁶Graves, I, 61.

The image seems to indicate more than this, however. Once he dreams of porpoises; most of his other dreams are of lions. Once he surpasses human boundaries and goes into the beyond. He goes beyond himself as a mortal, which means he reaches beyond his human nature to his divine nature.

The mythical dolphin that served Poseidon was made sacred, became divine, when it reached beyond the known limitations to perform its mission. Perhaps the Old Man, too, attains divinity in his moment of extremity beyond the known limitations, and his dream acknowledges this.

He is a fisherman. It is his mission to be a superior fisherman, especially to compensate for his eighty-four fishless days. He becomes the extraordinary man simply through being the ordinary man intensified. He is heroically caught in that moment of intensity. Although the symbol of that moment is lost to him in the flesh, in material gain, for the flesh of the marlin is gone, the bone of the moment remains--symbolically, the enduring part.

Intellectually what endures is the knowledge that he did not fail in his mission. What endures is the significance of that fact: "And what beat you, he thought, 'Nothing,' he said aloud." (p. 120) The skeleton represents the significance, the fact, of the giant marlin. The Old Man has beaten a giant of strength at sea in another sort of hand game, as he had earlier beaten a giant of strength on land. This places him in command of his dual nature, both the human and the heroic or divine.

The Old Man returns fully to his human nature when he faces Manolin and acknowledges defeat. Manolin, representing human nature at its best, reassures him by saying that the fish did not defeat him. The Old Man, though,

is powerless in the limitations of his human nature and succumbs to it. He dies dreaming again of the lions. We are given to understand that it is a happy ending because he loved the lions and they made him happy. "He waited to see if there would be more lions and he was happy." (p. 81) After all, human nature at its best, represented in the playful lions, the boy and the Old Man, is no small thing.

Again, a detail might be more complex than it at first appears, because we can assume that the Old Man's orientation, like that of the dolphin, is to the sea. "It is enough to live on the sea and kill our true brothers." (p. 75)

The Old Man spends the best part of his life at sea. He is not of the community on land. He goes ashore only to take his catch and to sleep. He uses his time ashore only to prepare for his life at sea. In his dying he again is like the dolphin, who, acclimated to the sea, goes to shore to die. As Hemingway might say, "when he feels his death in him," the dolphin separates himself from his society and seeks the shore. It dies alone. It is almost as though the Old Man does the same thing. When he "gets his death in him," he goes ashore and withdraws to die. He dies in the fullness of his human nature, dreaming happily of human nature at its best. Perhaps it is an expression of contentment with the best in human nature.

Once the Old Man had gone out too far. Once he had dreamed of porpoises. He had dreamed of ten miles of porpoises. "And it was the time of their mating and they would leap high into the air and return into the same hole they had made in the water when they leaped." (p. 81) The mating season

transforms the female dolphin coquette into the joyful mate of the dashing male aggressor. Tumultuous play gives way to side by side swimming marked by nuzzling, rubbing, flipper blows and high leaps. A courtship may cover several hundred miles.²⁷

The Old Man dreamed of peace, perhaps, when he dreamed of porpoises, but it is not an insipid, languid kind of peace. It is an active peace. Porpoises, the most peaceable of mammals, are never still, and the dreamed ones indulge in high leaps. The most emphatic point is that, because the leaps are leaps of courtship, they are especially joyous leaps, which implies a joyous, productive peace--the best concept of peace. Once the Old Man had gone out too far. Once he had gone beyond his best human nature and achieved the divine. Once he had dreamed of porpoises.

To present an understanding of Hemingway's Santiago as an ordinary man made extraordinary, we have examined the dolphin as symbol. Then we have looked at the humanlikeness of the dolphin as animal and suggested its divine or heroic nature. In this way the dolphin has been likened to man in respect to its dual nature, and man, to the dolphin.

Following this, the Old Man has been indicated as epic hero in demonstrated analogies to the dolphin, to Prince Rama and to Saint James. Further Christian mythology also is remarked. Then, frolicking lions are seen to be the peaceful imagery of human nature at its best. Finally, the specific dolphin

²⁷James Poling, "Egghead--Clown of the Sea," Coronet, LXIX (April 1961), 50-54.

symbol in Hemingway, that of frolicking porpoises, is shown to depict the joyous serenity of the divine nature which the ordinary human being is capable of attaining when he surpasses ordinariness to become extraordinary, heroic--divine.

CHAPTER III

THE DOLPHIN AS SYMBOL IN YEATS

The unpurged images of day recede;
 The Emperor's drunken soldiery are abed;
 Night resonance recedes, night-walkers' song
 After great cathedral gong;
 A starlit or a moonlit dome disdains
 All that man is,
 All mere complexities,
 The fury and the mire of human veins.

Before me floats an image, man or shade,
 Shade more than man, more image than a shade,
 For Hades' bobbin bound in mummy-cloth
 May unwind the winding path;
 A mouth that has no moisture and no breath
 Breathless mouths may summon;
 I hail the superhuman;
 I call it death-in-life and life-in-death.

Miracle, bird or golden handiwork,
 More miracle than bird or handiwork,
 Planted on the star-lit golden bough,
 Can like the cocks of Hades crow,
 Or, by the moon embittered, scorn aloud
 In glory of changeless metal
 Common bird or petal
 And all complexities of mire or blood.

At midnight on the Emperor's pavement flit
 Flames that no faggot feeds, nor steel has lit,
 Nor storm disturbs, flames begotten of flame,
 Where blood-begotten spirits come
 And all complexities of fury leave,
 Dying into a dance,
 An agony of trance,
 An agony of flame that cannot singe a sleeve.

Astraddle on the dolphin's mire and blood,
 Spirit after spirit! The smithies break the flood,
 The golden smithies of the Emperor!
 Marbles of the dancing floor
 Break bitter furies of complexity,
 These images that yet
 Fresh images beget,
 That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea.²⁸

There's nothing new
 We can't expect to happen!
 Anything at all, you can bet,
 Is ready to jump out at us.
 No need to wonder over it.
 Father Zeus has turned
 Noon to night, blotting
 The sunshine utterly,
 Putting cold terror
 At the back of the throat.
 Let's believe all we hear.
 Even that dolphins and cows
 Change place, porpoises and goats,
 Rams booming along in the offing,
 Mackerel nibbling in the hill pastures.
 I wouldn't be surprised,²⁹
 I wouldn't be surprised.

Often a reader finds that William Butler Yeats's symbolism is not rendered less complex when attacked symbol by symbol in the order presented within a specific poem. At such a time, the reader might find it helpful to choose only one symbol and explore its possible significance, both within its immediate context and within the larger scope of the whole poem.

For instance, in "Byzantium," a short poem of five stanzas, a

²⁸William Butler Yeats, "Byzantium," Collected Poems (New York, 1956), p. 243. Textural references are to this edition.

²⁹Carmina Archilochi, The Fragments of Archilochos, trans. Guy Davenport (Berkeley, Calif., 1964, p. 42 (113).

dazzling kaleidoscope of rather terrifying images greets the reader. Certain images recur, surfacing as slight variants of their initial form. One of the more immediately noticeable of these recurring images ends the first stanza, appears at the end of the third stanza, and probably controls the fifth and last stanza altogether.

That is the image offered in "The fury and the mire of human veins," in "And all complexities of mire and blood," and in "Astraddle on the dolphin's mire and blood/Spirit after Spirit! . . . Break bitter furies of complexity."

What becomes at once clear about these images is that the first two seem to be solely abstractions and only the last one seems tied to any concrete symbol. This last is tied to the word dolphin, and that word figures twice in the last stanza: in the first line and in the final one, "the dolphin's mire and blood" and "That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea." It would be difficult to decide which of the two usages is the more startling, for both are violent images that come hurtling upon the reader and then reverberate, much as the ring of a gong does.

But the most startling fact is the use of the dolphin as a symbol. One wonders why the symbol of a playful, peaceful mammal is used in the often violent imagery of "Byzantium," which was written after the age of technology had affirmed itself. The answers cannot come as reasons but only as suggestions; in fact, perhaps only as one suggestion. That is in what lies behind the dolphin as symbol that might substantiate its use as a powerful and provocative image.

The proposition, then, of this essay is that the poet's use of dolphin

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The proposition, then, of this essay is that the poet's use of dolphin

symbolizes the disciplined human intellect. This will be shown by looking at two particular historical periods: a classical period and a medieval one.

At the time of "Byzantium," Yeats was enjoying his very complex second mythological phase. In this poem (and also for "Sailing to Byzantium" and "The Dialogue of Self and Soul"), he specifically selected for his imagery the Grecian Age of Pericles and Constantinople at its eleventh century zenith. Both periods are golden periods. Both periods especially expressed their intensity in marble and in gilt. Both periods found strength in limiting painting to a few bold colors. Both periods deemed their smithies golden and gave them special regard as the Emperor's own.³⁰

Both oriental Christian Byzantium and Periclean Phidian Athens crowned western civilization. As is attested in their art, both professed the enduring values of the mind and spirit rather than the transitory and the sensual. Phidian sculptured portraits--solemn, epical, enormous--lacked humor but still, together with Pericles' strength of character, have, through the ages, exemplified the high aim of their century.

Byzantine art reflected the universal in the continuity of its painted vaults and arches, and of its mosaic walls and floors. Like its Athenian counterpart, it, too, was devoid of gaiety, but spoke then, and speaks now--solemnly,

³⁰ In this interpretation of "Byzantium" smithies assumes its meaning that is listed second in the dictionary: artisans, hence, artists. Emperor seems equally appropriate for Athens as for Constantinople as in the aristocratic Athenian city-state, the chief of state held imperial dignity.

epically, cosmically.³¹ Both the Christian imperial period and the pagan Athenian one valued the dolphin as symbol.

It is easy to think that Yeats's selection of the two periods stems from his own aims and ideas in art. The Reader's Companion to World Literature makes the following statement: "Yeats was constructing a startling edifice from fragments; the two Byzantium poems and A Dialogue of Self and Soul . . . more than justify his system."³² So, too, were Athens with its Parthenon and Constantinople with its basilicas, churches and palaces, constructing startling edifices from fragments.

Because it was formed in units of blocks and single figures, this construction of "startling edifices from fragments" is as easily noticeable in the Parthenon as it is in the fragmentally formed mosaics of Byzantine art.³³ Had Yeats calculated on a single symbol to reap the greatest vitality simultaneously from both his chosen periods, he could scarcely have selected a more

³¹W. R. Lethaby, "Byzantine Art," The Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th ed. (1910), IV, 908.

³²Lillian Herlands Hornstein et al., New York, 1956, p. 489.

³³The two periods were constructing startling edifices of mind and of spirit, too. It is generally asserted that Phidias, universally regarded the greatest Greek sculptor, was not only the ruling spirit in Greek art, which, of course, includes architecture and city planning, but, according to Plutarch, Phidias was so much an adviser to Pericles that the political enemies of Pericles attacked him through Phidias. Yeats naturally would be attracted to the artist as ruling spirit, his superior human intellect directing, not just art, but world affairs. Phidias surely was a most golden of golden smithies. He is celebrated for the colossal figures he created in bronze and/or in ivory (flesh) and in gold (drapery), which the Greeks preferred even to their splendid Parthenon, (attributed to his pupils).

provocative image than that of the dolphin, which he elects to name twice in the last stanza of the five-stanza "Byzantium."³⁴

The medieval dolphin, standing for love, freedom, generosity, gentleness and pleasure, came in heraldry to represent charity, and kind affection to children. In the metaphorical language of heraldry itself, armorial bearings, a horse's tournament trappings, tapestries, falcon bracelets and signet rings, many materials lent themselves to the display of some graceful dolphin design.³⁵

The dolphin also figured in a variety of life's routine activities. As mentioned above (pp. 5-6), it was carved into the design of chairs, tables and beds and displayed on china and glassware. It sometimes marked superior craftsmanship as a "trademark." Also, dolphin was an expression applied to the pipe and source of a water supply, and was a nautical term for mooring buoy.³⁶

Yet the medieval dolphin spelled more than decoration, grace, charm, pleasure and Christian attitude. In association with such a variety of life's activities and diversions, it did not neglect life's central meaning. What was central to medieval man was the church and its sacraments. Fine art to medieval man was Christian art, and when the medieval dolphin graced fine art it emphasized the Christian connotation of diligence, swiftness and love. It adorned a

³⁴He uses it also twice in one stanza in his tri-stanzaed "News for the Delphic Oracle."

³⁵Bjerkoe, pp. 56-57.

³⁶OED, s.v. "dolphin."

papal shield where it signified what a dolphin with anchor or trident had meant to the early Christians--the "soul" of the Christian church.

In the Middle Ages the "soul" of the church was the state reached by the complete subjugation of the flesh to the mind and spirit. The Figure on the Cross, the medievalist's omnipresent symbol, represented the supreme disciplined human intellect. When the dolphin appeared twined round an anchor or trident to suggest the "soul" of the Christian church, it became symbolic of that Very Figure and, equally with the crucifix, served to denote the superior disciplined intellect.

The classical dolphin is no less a deeply significant symbol of man's intellectual force than is the medieval dolphin. This is demonstrable in three Greek myths: one concerning the poet Arion, one concerning the Shrine of Delphi, and one concerning Dionysus.

Yeats's dolphin risks all it is, and all it stands for, to convey the golden smithies through the flood. It is not an association new to dolphin imagery that the dolphin is courageous and that it is associated with the human intellect. The dolphin as salvager of man's potential, man's realized self, man's poetic destiny--man's own salvation of man--through endurance, mobility and intellect, suggestively appears in one of the oldest of dolphin myths. It is a man on a dolphin myth.³⁷

³⁷Stebbins, p. 60, sums up Hermann Usener's careful work on the flood myths by explaining that Usener unified the cumulation of what had seemed to be "a multitude of folk tales, . . . in which the dolphin plays a part . . . into a (Note continued on next page.)

Arion, a mortal, but a poet, in being conveyed by ship, was threatened with destruction by hostile forces, seamen, men of the sea. (The seamen had condemned him to death so that they might divide his poet's prizes.)³⁸

Arion chose to manifest man's godlike nature, his poetic, creative nature. He prepared for death by dressing in his poet's ceremonial robes, and, without a single quavering note, singing to his own lyre accompaniment, the difficult high-pitched "Orthian," he braved the seamen's threat.

Arion was not overwhelmed by the reality of imminent chaos or by the meaninglessness of his absurd death sentence. When the sailors threw him overboard, a dolphin, the salvation symbol of ark or chest, salvager of man's poetic destiny, conveyed the calm and undaunted poet onward in his continuous voyage toward immortality.³⁹

Another myth involving another set of mariners who encounter a dolphin

great main theme that underlies the several versions, . . . This theme originates in the rescue from the flood in an ark, . . . goes to the mutation of an infant god in a chest, rescue or conveyance in a ship, and in the final stage of rescue, on the back of a fish." A god or man riding a dolphin was common legend in classical Greece. During the hellinistic period the popular rider was a boy, most often Eros.

³⁸W. H. Auden, The Enchafed Flood or the Romantic Iconography of the Sea (New York, 1950) pp. 7-8, writes that the world emerged from a chaos so hostile that at any moment it may be overwhelmed by the destructive forces from which it came. The sea "is so little of a friendly symbol," Mr. Auden says, "that the first note the author of the Book of Revelation made in his vision of the end of time was, 'There was no more sea.'" (Seamen, then, are hostile forces.)

³⁹Pericles might well have been a direct spiritual descendant of Arion in his "calm and undaunted" frame of mind in moments of extreme stress. As both were men of dispassionate intellect influenced by the artist's spirit, Yeats must have found much to admire in both of them.

points again to the dolphin symbol as representing superior intellect. This myth underlines the symbol of the dolphin as a foremost intellectual power of the ancient world. Cretans, sailing about looking for the proper spot to erect a shrine to Apollo, have lost their way, when a dolphin rescues them from their confusion and leads them to the place that they would find. The Shrine of Delphi, which the Cretans established near the foot of Mount Parnassus, not far from the sea, took its name from Delphinus meaning dolphin. Again dolphin is suggestive of the ark, for the Shrine of Delphi, dedicated to Apollo, was refuge for the poor in spirit and a haven for the devout. Apollo's spirit, which in the form of the dolphin must have led the questing Cretans, spoke through the oracles of Delphi to those seeking healing and intelligence. The oracles, representing an accumulation of knowledge in all phases of human existence--health and medical care, war and political strategy, social decisions--placed the Delphi shrine close to the center of classical intellectual life. Because the very name Delphi attracted those seeking guidance, the dolphin, both literally and symbolically, figured as guiding spirit to the human intellect.

On the deeper level, the oracles further associated the dolphin spirit with disciplined human action because Delphi's god, Apollo, frequently running with the muses atop Mount Parnassus, was the god of poetry, the god of music, the god of song. He was kindred spirit to the music-loving dolphin, rescuer of the poet Arion, guide of the Cretan Apollo devotees, servant and savior of the human intellect.

Professor Vincent Scully succinctly substantiates this thought in his The

Earth, the Temple and the Gods: Greek Sacred Architecture when he says:

Clearly enough, Apollo is intellect, discipline, and purity--central, as so many modern writers have insisted, to the archaic formulation of some of Hellenic society's most nobly human ends--but, equally clearly the site [of Delphi (of the Dolphin)] tells us that Apollo is those qualities embodied in an implacably heroic force.⁴⁰

Astraddle on the dolphin's mire and blood,
Spirit after spirit! The smithies break the flood,
The golden smithies of the Emperor!
Marbles of the dancing floor
Break bitter furies of complexity,
Those images that yet
Fresh images beget,
That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea.⁴¹

Yeats's dolphin bears on its rescuing back the "golden smithies of the Emperor," the artists, the poets, the superior beings of intellect. Arion had called on his poet's discipline, his intellectual strength, to surmount the "bitter furies of complexity," "The fury and the mire of human veins." He survived by affirming life, which to him was the life of the intellect, the supreme aesthetic, the eternal values as opposed to the momentary and sensual. Many a Yeatsian poem is just that--an affirmation of the intellectual life force that not only brings order out of complexity, but gives to that order a unity of being and a dignity that makes the aesthetic life capable of enduring tragedy.

An aid to interpreting Yeats's flood might be found in a Dionysian infant myth. Here it is the dolphin image as a seaworthy chest that guides the infant savior safely through the treacherous waters.

⁴⁰(New Haven, 1962), p. 100.

⁴¹Yeats, p. 243.

Another Dionysian myth permits relating the enduring superior quality of the intellect suggested in the poem to the dolphin as well as to the artist. That the dolphin has an intelligence equal, if not superior, to that of human beings is no new thought.

Lucian and Oppian testify to the general belief of the classical age that the dolphin had a humanlike intelligence, which each of these writers attributes, along with the dolphin's mysterious kindness to man, to the incident of the Tyrrhenian pirates who were turned into dolphins.⁴²

The Greek myth sees the transformation of man's evil nature into the nature of the peaceable, amiable dolphin. It renders evil nature into not simply a better condition, but into the best condition (calling to mind the miracle at Cana where water was turned not merely into an adequate wine but into the best wine). By turning the pirates into dolphins, Dionysus surpassed the act of making them harmless by making them active agents of the best possible good. He endowed them with a superior quality that promised to endure.⁴³

"Byzantium" symbolism flashes a strong emotional attack with the

⁴²Two pertinent references are Lucian, Lucian, trans. A. M. Harmon, VII, New York, 1961, 173 (I, 8); and Oppian, pp. 269-270, 493 and 503 (I, 649-654; V, 422f, and 519f). The modern mind finds this a truth explainable through the theory of evolution. Dolphins, a very highly evolved land creature, after having evolved originally in the sea, returned to the sea to evolve into possibly the most intelligent creature of land or sea.

⁴³Another myth prevailed among Red Sea sailors who feared to wound a dolphin because of a belief that Pharoah's army had been changed from evil Israelite pursuers into dolphins. (G. Jobes, Dictionary of Mythology, Folklore and Symbols (New York, 1961), I, s.v. "dolphin.")

constant interplay between images of eternity and images of death forming a mosaic of battling forms. The power of the intellect is balanced against the force of the sensual. Eternity opposes death. Birth agony stands with death torment. The overall effect seems to say: never birth without death; never creation without totality--total dread, total risk, total commitment--immortality only through destruction.

Specifically, the golden smithies of the Emperor, the artists, the poets, break the flood astraddle the dolphin, which apparently has dared the greatest risks dolphins can encounter: that of foundering and that of being seriously wounded. Mire might signify foundering, being trapped by the tide, or rather, not catching the tide, that is a particular hazard to the shoalwater dolphin, both to Tursiops (Bottlenose) and Delphinus (Common). It might also signal the risk of being soiled with the dirt of the world, of being stuck in the mud of humanity, risking contamination with the filth of worldliness. Yeats's dolphin has risked a foundering death in humanity's mire, as well as a bleeding death from wounds inflicted by its enemy.⁴⁴

Astraddle the "active agents of the best possible good," astride the symbol of the superior intellect, the golden artists risk the flood and break it.

⁴⁴The only enemy the dolphin has is the enemy that nature gave it. It is that symbol of evil and destruction, the shark, which, doing no good whatsoever, is the antithesis of the dolphin, which apparently does no harm whatsoever, except to sharks. Although we are cautioned not to judge a book by its cover, the shark and the Bottlenose dolphin personify evil and good in their physical appearances. The shark looks ferocious while the facial expression of the dolphin Tursiops is set in a perpetual smile. The enemy of the intellect is exactly what the destructive force deals in--confusion, chaos, disorder, bewilderment.

In a curious way the symbols of his [Yeats's] poetry become at once more important than what they symbolize. . . . But the symbols in [his poetry] also have many further connotations, particularly in the light they throw on one another when placed in opposition. In Yeats's poetry we are taken again and again beyond the limits of the situation or picture he originally presents. . . . His aim was to reach through to universal realizations rooted in the subconscious mind.⁴⁵

This quotation seems especially appropriate to the last two stanzas in "Byzantium."

At midnight on the Emperor's pavement flit
Flames that no faggot feeds, nor steel has lit,
Nor storm disturbs

"Flames that no faggot feeds" suggests "knowledge." Knowledge can feed itself. Knowledge begets knowledge. Wisdom begets wisdom. Wisdom, again, is, and is the product of, the disciplined human intellect.

Often associated with Aphrodite, the dolphin, in a variant of the Cyprian arrival, replaces the shell, the womb. Within any symbol significant paradoxes intermingle and move in juxtaposition. In Aphrodite's company, the dolphin's nature is demonstrated just as paradoxically in symbolizing love.⁴⁶

Although it retains its basic symbolism of immortality, the dolphin also assumes, in association with shell or womb, the quality of generation. It blends kaleidoscopically the love the uterus signifies with other interpretations

⁴⁵"Introduction," The British Poets in Chief Modern Poets of England and America, ed. Gerald DeWitt Sanders, John Herbert Nelson, and M. L. Rosenthal, 4th ed. (New York, 1962), I, 4-1.

⁴⁶It seems relevant here that Professor Goodenough is of the impression that the dolphin's relationship with Aphrodite represents a sturdy symbolic tradition, which does not stand for the specific qualities of Aphrodite, but which stands for the divine power. He feels this is also true when the association is with any other deity. (Goodenough, V, 25.)

of love--the love of the creator for the creature, the love of the servant for the lord, the love of compassion and brotherliness, and the love of parent for offspring.

Love begets love. Aphrodite, goddess of love, gives birth to Eros, godling of love. Eros, in turn begets love with his bow (symbol of the womb) and arrow (of course, a phallic symbol). This image permits the hermaphroditic suggestion to emerge. Creator and male and female creatures are all contained in one form--the symbol of love, Eros, or the symbol of love, the dolphin.

Just as love begetting love becomes an interpretation of the dolphin symbol when the dolphin is associated with a figure of love, Yeats's use of the dolphin symbol in association with the disciplined artistic intellect, the artist himself, places the symbol in such a light as to emphasize that aspect of the dolphin symbol--the disciplined intellect.

"Flames begotten of flames," might be knowledge begotten of knowledge, superior intellect begotten by superior intellect; or, the disciplined intellect begotten of the disciplined intellect. So it appears that the first part of the fourth stanza meets the poem's ending: "These images that yet/Fresh images beget," presenting kaleidoscopically just what the poem as a whole seems to do--offer a kaleidoscope of images that continually forms fresh images.

In summary, the images seem to form a repeating pattern that offers the following reading: no storm of hostility, no storm of confusion, no threat of chaos disturbs the enduring values of the mind and spirit. Wisdom, of course, is the value begotten by the disciplined intellect. Golden smithies, artists,

active agents of the best possible good, the disciplined intellect, knowledge,
 wisdom--all of these images that yet fresh images beget ride with Yeats's
 "Byzantium" dolphin onward toward immortality.

CHAPTER IV

THE DOLPHIN AS SYMBOL IN ELIOT



47

That Eliot has long pondered the conception that the mature artist must combine "the most ancient and the most civilized mentality" is shown by an observation which he made fifteen years before writing the passage on "the auditory imagination," in a review of Wyndham Lewis's Tarr (in The Egoist, September 1918): "The artist, I believe, is more primitive, as well as more civilized, than his contemporaries, his experience is deeper than civilization, and he only uses the phenomena of civilization in expressing it."⁴⁷

The dolphins of the Hemingway and Yeats works are living creatures symbolized, but in The Waste Land Eliot points to a figured dolphin, carved:

Huge sea-wood fed with copper
Burned green and orange, framed by the coloured stone,
In which sad light a carved dolphin swam.

⁴⁷ Franz Joseph Dölger, IXΘΥΣ: Das Fisch-Symbol in Frühchristlicher Zeit, in Der Heilige Fisch in den antiken Religionen und im Christentum, I (Münster in Westfalen, 1928), frontispiece and hardbound cover.

⁴⁸ F. O. Matthiessen, The Achievement of T. S. Eliott: An Essay on the Nature of Poetry (New York, 1959), p. 94.

Above the antique mantel was displayed
As though a window gave upon the sylvan scene.⁴⁹

In doing so he releases one of the drenching showers of evocation with which he floods his poetry, for it might well be the ritualistic sign, the early Christian Ichthys, that swims engraved "above the antique mantel." It will be the task of this essay to develop that suggestion and to extend it, approaching it through definitions of ritual and myth.

Eliot evokes thoughts of ritual when he mentions the "sylvan scene," setting off ritual's operation on the conscious, and doubtless on the unconscious, mind of the reader. The phrase is probably even more forceful because the poet calls attention to it in a note. This is but one reminder of ceremonial observance easily spotted in the poem. Such reminders pervade The Waste Land. Its very first words are THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD, in capital letters, and its closing ones are taken from the most ancient of benedictions. That blessing is the ending to the rite of an Upanishad, and its English relative is: "the peace that passeth understanding." The poem includes a division marked by the ritual of A GAME OF CHESS.⁵⁰ Another division in the poem is marked by the words FIRE and SERMON, both rituals and parts of ritual. THUNDER, marking another

⁴⁹T. S. Eliot, The Waste Land and Other Poems (New York, 1930), p. 32. All textual references are to this edition.

⁵⁰Although it often has been considered that chess originated in China and known that it was popular in Mesopotamia around 4000 B.C., the best authorities think that the game was invented in India. Of course, its date of initiation is lost in obscurity but it naturally would fall before the fifth millennium B.C., and be, perhaps, almost as ancient a ritual as those of the Upanishads. ("Chess," The Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th ed., VI (1910), p. 100.)

section, is again a ritualistic element from the Upanishads, while DEATH BY WATER, in its understanding of the symbolic washing away of sin through baptism, must have begun ritualistically in early Post-Eden.⁵¹

It is only commonplace to say that Eliot embraces a vast expanse of literature in his evocations. He calls upon pre-literature, too, and he is the first to tell us this when in his notes he cites his indebtedness to The Golden Bough.

To mention ritual it is almost always necessary to bring in myth as the two are interwoven and both are as old as mankind. Certainly the metaphorical window "above the antique mantel" frames a vista of Eden in which is posited not only the fundamental mythology of Christianity, but also, by derivation, basic western world philosophic and literary conceptions. One need read no further than the opening words of the poem to be stirred by a suggested vegetation myth: lilacs, hyacinths, hyacinth girls, hyacinth Garden.

In archaic myth modern man sees implications. He sees the how implying the why. He sees the how and the why together implying belief. In belief, in turn, he sees implied a sense of imagination working with and within a sense of reality.⁵² For telling how a real thing originated reveals, by way of the imagination, the entrance of that thing into the world. Being surrounded by real

⁵¹To the primitive the sound of thunder usually signified the voice of deity. Cards and fortune telling are old rituals, too.

⁵²In the mythical imagination there is always implied an act of belief. "Without the belief in the reality of its object, myth would lose its ground." (Ernst Cassirer, An Essay on Man (New Haven, 1944), p. 75.)

things deemed holy implies a preoccupation with the sacred. Together with routine patterns of attentiveness and respect, established rites called for by the sacred objects would adorn all human activity with sacred gestures. To the primitive mind, anything significant was holy. Above all, the creation was holy and life was holy. Periodic re-enactment of the sacred creation of real things was an act not only of preservation, but was simultaneously an act of regeneration. It was a repetition, and because the repetition concerned all the responsible acts of his life, the life of early man was "a ceaseless repetition of gestures initiated by others."⁵³

Others would mean forefathers and supernatural beings, the gods who had been in intimate association with man until through some ritual mistake or neglect man had alienated himself from the gods and had come to live closely with suffering. Keeping the ritual, then, must have given reality and, therefore, meaning to all primitive behavior.⁵⁴

This sense of ritual to which the dolphin points seems to reside in The Waste Land's skeletal frame. Because modern man is profane man in the Eden he has desecrated, the poem seems to declare that he can only be redeemed by consecrating his life's activities to meaningfulness. Ever since Eden man has profaned life. He has spent time killing life and laying waste the land. Having destroyed all meaning of life, he marks time with sterile gestures:

⁵³Mircea Eliade, Cosmos and History (New York, 1958), p. 6.

⁵⁴Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane (New York, 1961), pp. 11-16.

I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter. (p. 29)

I could not
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing. (p. 30)

I see crowds of people, walking round in a ring. (p. 31)

Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many,
Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet. (p. 31)

"Do
"You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you remember
"Nothing?" (p. 33)

We who are living are now dying
With a little patience. (p. 42)

To revive man's world, The Waste Land seems to say that it is necessary for modern man to return to the primitive ritual of sacred gestures. To do so means rebirth, and to be reborn one must go through the desert of the spirit. One cannot be reborn unless he truly dies.

At this point the poem's dolphin symbol becomes crucial. It is necessary to go through death to reach immortality. The earliest image of the dolphin apparently is that of conveyor through Noah's flood.⁵⁵ Following this symbol as savior-ark to primitive man in the hostile waters came its appropriation as a symbol of safe transport on land. It must have been an easy transition for the symbolic dolphin then to become a conveyor of the dead through the shades of death into eternity.

⁵⁵Stebbins, p. 60.

Eliot chooses to hang his dolphin symbol conspicuously early amid his central vegetation imagery and so stamps his dolphin with deep significance. It seems to be a provocative symbol scarcely chosen at random.

First of all, it is a carved image. Inscriptions, crude scratchings and graffiti, (see quotation above, p. 4) one will admit, are writing, and so, too, is anything carved, such as The Waste Land's dolphin. Each may equally be said to signify a written symbol, e.g., a literary sign. It might be fancied that the dolphin has existed as a literary symbol from very early times. In fact, as mentioned above (pp. 4-5), dolphin appliques on ostrich eggs, deliberate signs, were found in the shaft graves of Mycenae.

This, naturally predates history. It indicates that a "written" immortality sign acted on the imagination of man as far back as the prehistoric age. This is an important detail in Eliot's work, because Eliot reaches back into prehistory for active literary images. When the long pagan tradition of the dolphin as symbol of the soul conveyor meets Judaism and then Christianity, the symbol becomes no less meaningful. Rather, its meaning becomes richer. Still signifying immortality, it was absorbed into the Christian understanding of sacrifice, salvation and resurrection, of "greater love hath no man." "It [the dolphin symbol] always carried its symbolic value with it, however, and in whatever association it was presented suggested the loving concern of deity to bring one into a happy life after death."⁵⁶

⁵⁶Goodenough, V, 26.

The early Christian fish symbol, also originating in paganism, became, of course, just as significant as the dolphin. The IXΘYS both symbolized Christ and was Christ--in meaning fish and in being acrostic. Early Christians used the fish monogram as a protective motif over the doorways of their houses. North African Jewesses effected the dolphin in amulets, in headdresses and along the borders of their dresses as much for protection as for fertility.⁵⁷

The same idea stood behind both dolphin and IXΘYS. That the dolphin symbol and the IXΘYS are one is further attested to in the epigraph to this chapter. The drawing demonstrates that the Bottlenose dolphin is the IXΘYS. Franz Joseph Dölger in his comprehensive IXΘYS felt that the Christians had first used the fish symbol in Syria.⁵⁸

Professor Goodenough agrees "that it is the oriental fish symbol which appears in John VI, the earliest explicit acceptance of the fish as a eucharistic symbol and as a symbol of the Savior, who was eaten in the Eucharist."⁵⁹

To this he adds (from the same place):

When **[Hermann] Leclercq** [the noted European authority] concludes that the Christians used the dolphin to indicate the Savior, he points out what seems only a continuation and adaptation of its pagan value. Leclercq thinks that in Christian art the dolphin twisted on the anchor or trident is Christ on the Cross, and this seems generally presumed.

Professor Goodenough goes on to say:

⁵⁷Goodenough, V, 26.

⁵⁸Dölger, ii.

⁵⁹Goodenough, V, 27.

If Leclercq's guess is correct about the meaning of the dolphin and trident, the Christian interpretation does not change the value of the symbol. The interpretation still follows a method ascribed to Paul at Athens: it gives a specific name to the Unknown God, saying in effect, "Christ is the true dolphin."⁶⁰

Dolphin-IXΘYS imagery is relevant to The Waste Land not only in the carved dolphin per se but in relation to that chief figure, the Fisher King. In the Fisher King figure, as everyone knows, lie both sterility and fertility symbolism, as well as that of a dying god. The Fisher King cannot survive either as a king or as a fisherman without water. Eliot's dolphin swims in a "sad light" because there is no water. It is dying. Hence, a repetition of the dying god motif also appears in this dolphin image. It embodies as well the two opposing ideas: DEATH BY WATER and death from lack of water. The ambiguous DEATH BY WATER theme is a large one containing the generalities of baptism and drowning, and specifically, the "Phoenician sailor" and "fear death by water." Because the sailor is Phoenician one thinks of the Mediterranean fertility god who was drowned each year in effigy.⁶¹ The Fisher King fertility god, on the other hand, is dying from lack of water.

On Eliot's antique mantel we see the dying dolphin caught in the sad light in which the negligence of humanity has set it. It simultaneously symbolizes all humanity in the poem, as all humanity is perishing. We look at the dolphin's carved shape and see a sign older than time that translates into the IXΘYS. To

⁶⁰Goodenough, V, 27.

⁶¹Audrey F. Cahill, T. S. Eliot and The Human Predicament (Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, 1967), p. 46, also calls this to mind.

read the IXΘYS as a Christian symbol that predates Christianity is probably just what the poet is asking us to do. For Christianity began at the beginning of creation, and the Historical Jesus is but God's reminder. The Waste Land seems to be the Book of Job of the modern world--a poetical voice searching for the meaning of existence. The Waste Land finds no meaning but offers faint hope, especially in three heavily ritualistic suggestions: (1) in the possibility of a saving rain anticipated by the sound of thunder (2) in the significance of the carved dolphin and (3) in the poem's ending--that earliest extant blessing--shanti.⁶²

The "peace that passeth understanding" is not the peace that is beyond comprehension. It is the peace on the other side of comprehension. When we understand[the meaning of existence] we shall have the peace [of wisdom]. The Waste Land stipulates that first we must render back meaning into existence through regaining reverence for life--e.g., returning to the primitive condition of reverence for all creation.⁶³

The Waste Land suggests that ritual is the means by which man can give meaning to life. The meaningless life must die and be regenerated with meaning. That is why the dolphin life-symbol swims in such a sad light. It

⁶²"Only by releasing the magical possibilities in words can the poet impart the feeling that he has sunk 'to the most primitive and forgotten,' that his thought and emotions have returned 'to the origin' and have brought back a deeper sense of life." (Matthiessen, p. 86.)

⁶³What Eliot wrote of Baudelaire (Matthiessen quoting Eliot, p. 18) might be said of Eliot: "It is not merely in the use of common life, not merely in the use of imagery of the sordid life of a great metropolis, but in the elevation of such imagery to the first intensity--presenting it as it is, and yet making it represent something much more than itself--that [Eliot] has created a mode of release and expression for other men."

sickens to death in the light humanity has cast on it. To revive, it needs a new light that is as old as it is--the warm, glad focus of ritual and meaning.

Summarily, the dolphin symbol in the ninety-sixth line of The Waste Land is the carved Ichthys monogram. In its calculated placement it invests the poem with meaning, i.e., that the meaning of existence is in a sad light, that life itself is in a sad light. In this way it symbolizes the central meaning of the poem: life has lost its significance.

At the same time, because it is a protective sign and a symbol of immortality, it symbolizes the hope that the poem offers. The dolphin-IXΘYS symbol of The Waste Land presents the possibility of redemption, slim but firm, through re-establishing reverence for life by means of ritual.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

A symbol, of course, always expresses the same thing but lends itself to different interpretations according to its immediate context and to the entire work in which it figures. Because the dolphin always symbolizes immortality, it is seen as standing for immortality in the three works under discussion. Yet it varies in its representation in those works. It is the immortality of the heroic moment or nature that speaks through the dolphin imagery of the Hemingway novel. In the Yeats poem, it is the immortality of the disciplined intellect. And in Eliot, the dolphin's basic symbolism, revealed in a reverence for life that gives meaning to living, points to the immortality of meaningful ritual. Thus the dolphin symbol, so vocal in the past, effectively reveals imagery and communicates meaning today through informing distinguished works of modern literature.

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